

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing St
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AA

24 June 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

As Chair of ukactive, I'm writing to express my disappointment at the decision to delay the reopening of indoor facilities within the sport and physical activity sector, and to seek reassurances for a swift resolution. My disappointment and frustration is shared today by millions across the country who own, work at, and use these community assets.

ukactive submitted comprehensive health and safety guidance to the Government on 7th May, following a five-week consultation with our members. This guidance detailed how the sector would respect social distancing measures and enhance already robust hygiene and sanitisation measures. The Government welcomed this documentation and ukactive, alongside operator representatives, supported the integration of this guidance into the overarching draft guidance for the whole sport and physical activity sector, which we believed was ready for publication. At no point were any formal concerns raised about the proposed operating model within our guidance, and no formal questions asked for ukactive or our operators to respond to – an act we would have undertaken enthusiastically.

Given this sequence of events, the omission of our sector from the reopening plans yesterday has shocked the whole sector. The message from the Secretary of State stating an aspiration to reopen indoor gyms and leisure facilities in mid-July is something I personally welcome, but regrettably many in the sector have lost faith in the process. I urge you to oversee the following chain of events to restore faith and confidence in this process:

1. Provide formal reasons for the omission of the sector from yesterday's announcement, including an explanation on how the relative risk of a busy pub at one-metre social distancing is lower than a controlled gym or leisure centre environment;
2. For ukactive and sector representatives to have direct meetings with the Chief Medical Officer and his team to address the remaining questions on the sector;
3. For Government officials and the Chief Medical Officer's team to visit show sites representing the variety of facilities we have in the sector, and
4. To set out a clear timetable for reopening the sector, with an agreed date.

The consequences of further delays and ambiguity are stark. Communities across the UK are now on notice at the potential loss of facilities in their towns and high streets, with more than 2,800 facilities at risk of closure and more than 100,000 jobs at risk, which is more than half of the workforce in fitness and leisure facilities. Furthermore, to lose these facilities in the midst of the biggest health crisis could set back public health for a generation. The loss would be catastrophic to communities:

- We will lose swimming pools and children's swimming lessons.
- We will lose social prescribing services that offer GPs the ability to prescribe physical activity to aid recovery and health in patients undergoing prehab, rehab or managing long-term health conditions.
- We will lose facilities and services for community groups, such as classes for older people, BAME communities, people with disabilities, and schools.

- We will lose over £3.3bn of social value per annum, based on the benefits provided to the population's health and wellbeing.

Prime Minister, this is a personal plea to you. I fear further delays could see us lose these facilities forever. This sector needs to be at the heart of the fight against Covid-19, and I urge you and your team to do everything you can to save the sector.

Yours sincerely,



Tanni Grey-Thompson
Chair, ukactive